

## Hope in God

### 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

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**Intro:** I am amazed by the GPS system on our phones. The days of using paper maps, and more importantly, of folding up maps the right way is a thing of the past. We can now trust this app to get us to any new location by the simple entry of an address. I also like how the GPS talks to me. It sounds so very confident in each of its individual directions, whether it says 'in 600 feet turn right,' or 'stay in the four lanes to the left', or 'take the exit', and usually - 'exit now', which seems to have a bit more emphasis than I would like. However, it has been indispensable traveling to new places. We used it quite a bit in our sabbatical in 2018 when we visited several National and State Parks across the nation.

One day during our sabbatical, when we were in South Dakota, I noticed we were within 40 miles of Wind Cave National Park. I love caves and decided to go see this Park the next morning since the rest of our party was not interested. So, I placed the address in my phone from the internet, and headed out very early the next morning in order to arrive when the Park opened in order to get in line for one of the more popular guided tours.

As I drove, my GPS, with Siri's voice, it directed me from turn to turn with that ever-confident tone. She surprised me with a 'turn left here', and I left the paved highway and began to drive for a while on a dirt road. Interesting.... I thought, but National Park locations are usually off of the beaten path. But it was now taking a bit longer than I thought, when to my surprise, Siri confidently proclaimed, 'You have arrived'.

As I pulled off of the dirt road and looked around, I was in the middle of nowhere. I looked around and saw no signs, no cars, no buildings, there was not even a paved road in sight. Siri had confidently led me to the wrong location. I trusted Siri, and she led me wrong. That morning my trust in Siri was not well placed. And that misplaced trust left me lost. Fortunately, through some backtracking and use of common sense, I eventually was able to find the Wind Cave and enjoyed the Park.

In our passage today, Paul is showing us the danger of mis-placed trust. But this misplaced trust Paul is showing us, has a much more significant consequence than my GPS experience. My trust in Siri only got me to the wrong location. Paul is helping us to see that misplaced trust while going through trials in our lives has a far more dangerous outcome than just ending up in the wrong location in South Dakota. **Our hope is placed on what we trust**, so when our trust is mis-placed, we are headed for eventual discouragement, disappointment, even spiritual danger.

**Scripture: Philippians 1:8-11**

*For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*

**Main Idea: Placing our hope in God, enables us to endure all adversity.**

**Prayer**

- 1. Trials are difficult**
- 2. Trials are revealing**
- 3. Trials bring opportunity**

**I. Trials are difficult (8 - 9a)**

Paul's experience was difficult, so difficult that he thought the only deliverance he would experience from this was death. We don't know what it was that Paul was experiencing, but we do know that it was a very severe affliction, or trial.

There is some thought that the event of the Ephesian riot and insurrection against Paul and his companions, recorded in Acts 19:21 - 41, is in view here, but that is

just conjecture. Even though we do not know what situation was referring to here, we do know how it affected Paul.

**8b - ‘We were utterly burdened (under great pressure)’.** The allusion is to a wearied animal that sinks in despair under a burden beyond its strength.

**8b - that we despaired of life itself.** The expression is intense — “to be utterly at a loss” or ‘absolutely without a way of escape’. It seemed impossible to the apostle that he could escape from whatever his enemies were bringing, whatever the peril, or trials were, it seemed impossible.

**9. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.** So far from expecting to live, the apostle says, he had in himself ‘the sentence (or verdict) of death.’ In other words, he did not expect to escape with his life.

**Paul knows trial.** We see later in this letter Paul’s review of many of his trials. Paul had experienced many different forms of persecution. But in all of his sufferings, only this situation he is referring to here in chapter one, had an impact that caused him to despair. Let’s review them together.

*Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. 2Corinthians 11:25-28.*

Paul experiences trials beyond what I will ever experience. However, here in chapter 1, Paul is wanting the Corinthians to know something about the inherent danger in trials from someone who ‘knows trial’. **Even Paul fell prey to despair.**

Just like it was with Paul, **trials bring burdens** for us to carry as well. Paul said that they were burdened *beyond their ability* to endure. Trials are real and they bring real burdens into our lives, that we must carry in getting through the trial, as

Paul did. The burden can be involving some physical danger, as it was for Paul in some instances, but **it can be spiritual danger** as well.

Paul does not describe the physical danger, but he does describe the spiritual danger, so that the Corinthians, and us as well, do not repeat the same mistake he made. **Paul is pointing us to is the danger of mis-placed trust.** What he *'relied upon'* or what he looked to for *'rescue'*, for *'deliverance'* was the focus. Through this trial, Paul found that he was relying too much upon himself to get through this difficult affliction. In other words, Paul's misplaced trust and confidence for rescue was placed on himself.

(9b) *'But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.'*

## **II. Trials are revealing**

Trials are distasteful, unwanted, difficult, and we certainly want to live without them! But can we? **They are part of life.** What Paul is helping us to see is that as difficult as trials are, they are useful to the believer. Our response to trials reveals things about us. Specifically, trials reveal things about what motivates us, about what is important to us, about what we love, and in that, what is ruling our thoughts, motives, and actions.

**Paul had it revealed to him through this affliction that he was relying on Himself more than he was relying on God.** He found that he had a trust in himself that eclipsed his trust for God. His hope for deliverance, or rescue, was relying on himself. He had a mis-placed trust and confidence in himself and it led him to complete despair.

**Paul describes this trial as so severe that he expected death.** The revelation he received from God about this situation, was for him to see that he responded to it, in a self-reliant way, rather than being God reliant. However, as his dependence shifted, so did his hope.

Paul saw the benefit of this trial in being able to clearly see how he responded to it... To see that he was not relying, trusting in, or following God. That relying,

trusting, was **more on himself in this situation**. He saw that as a result of this trial.

Trial gives us the opportunity to turn and trust God. To trust and depend that the promises of God, will come to light. Trusting that a sovereign God is in control, even over this, and every trial, is the goal.

Now that the trial was over, and Paul looks back and sees what had taken place, **He sees that God had delivered them**. God was the deliverer it was not through Paul and his experience, or his intellect, or his training, or his wisdom - that had not delivered them.... God delivered them and Paul was now convinced of this.

Paul then, based on this experience, **now has the faith to trust God in a deeper way**, when looking forward to whatever trials may lay ahead of him. And through his experience he is encouraging the Corinthians to have that same faith.

*“He delivered us from such a deadly peril and he will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.” 1:10*

Paul realizes, and through this trial can now see more clearly, when his hope is centered on something other than on God. He has now centered his hope on God, and through his experience of relying on, or trusting himself, and therefore **feeling the burden of self-trust**, he is encouraging us to trust God as well, in our various trials.

**Adversity or as Paul states it, affliction, is difficult all by itself**. However, when we are carrying the load of affliction without dependence upon God, sin begins to have an influence on how we are processing life.

Self-trust is not a sin that lives by itself in our hearts. This sin of selfish pride brings company with it in an attempt to rule our hearts and motives. Typically, fear and anxiety become an unwelcomed guests.

- “We must accept the adversity and resist the anxiety. We often do the opposite.” Jerry Bridges

**Anxiety is fear** that quickly gets the situation out of focus and convinces us to see the trial with ourselves at the center of life, and not God. Fear seems to easily convince us of things that are not true about ourselves and about God, but in the moment of adversity, the wrong perspective can feel very true.

**A. I feel this trial is too hard for me to endure, it can't be God's will.**

1. **Rather than:** God is more concerned with my soul than my comfort -
2. *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 1Peter 4:12,13*

**B. I feel God does not love for me like I thought He did.**

1. **Rather than:** God is the good shepherd His Word declares Him to be -
2. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Psalm 23:1*

**C. I feel this injustice is wrong and God is powerless to stop it, or he would.**

1. **Rather than:** God is sovereign in this and in complete control -
2. *For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen." Romans 11:36*

**D. I feel that God will not protect me, I guess I will have to just protect myself.**

1. **Rather than:** God is the one protecting me, the one I can now run to...

2. *God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble. Psalm 6:1,2*

E. **I feel that I can't carry this any longer, I do not have what it takes to get through this, it is beyond what I can do.**

1. **Rather than:** God said that all power is found in Him for me to live this life

2. *I can do all things through God who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13*

F. **I feel so alone. God must have left me on my own to deal with this. He is not with me like I thought He was. Rather than:**

1. God will never leave me or forsake me

2. *I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28:20*

3. *I will never leave you or forsake you. Hebrews 13:5*

It is walking through the trial that reveals these heart issues to us. Through the pressures in trial, we can see more clearly who we place our trust in, and where our hope lies.

Jerry Bridges: "We must see our circumstances through God's love rather than what we are prone to do, see God's love through our circumstances."

How do we show a lack of trust in God, and instead, show a trust in ourselves when in the midst of a trial? Do we see the mis-placed trust and confidence in ourselves as serious as God sees it? Do we see the road that it takes us down?

"To trust in one's self is a piece of impertinent pride, insulting to the majesty of heaven. It is a preference of ourselves to God, so that we take our own opinion in preference to his revelation. We follow our own whim in preference to his providential direction; we, as it were, become gods to ourselves, and act as if we knew better than God. It is, therefore, a very

high crime and misdemeanor against the majesty of heaven that we should trust in ourselves; and in whomsoever this exists, it makes a man intolerable to God.” Charles Spurgeon

Paul here was being able to trust God for deliverance this time and securing hope in God for every future time.

In the late 70's there was a commercial for a common upset stomach cure. The commercial was simply interviewing several people asking the same question - How do you spell relief? They would answer - ROLAIDS. Well, if you asked Paul this question - How do you spell RELIEF? I believe he would answer - T-R-U-S-T. And that T-R-U-S-T is in God alone.

**Trials are inevitable.** They should not surprise us, but they always do. But as was with the apostle Paul, trials are revealing. The question for us is what is being revealed? What is being revealed about what we believe about God?

**Trials puts our dependence on display for us to see.** Then in reviewing our response to adversity, we can recognize where we place our hope. Where is our dependence? Remember, when we depend upon ourselves, sinful burdens follow.

**We see our trials through God's love as we look to Jesus.** He bore our sin and carried our sorrows. Do we work to clearly see God in the midst of our trial, and then place our trust in Him? Trust regardless if we truly understand or agree with what is happening to us or around us.

- John 16:33 - “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

**Burdens bring hope... because of the power and truth of the gospel** – seen in our union with Christ. Our position in Christ is the beginning of our resistance to the enemy. It is the sure ground of our faith to resist. For Paul, self-reliance was a burden; relying on God brought freedom.



Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia around 55/56, A.D.; a year or so after writing 1 Corinthians, and a year before he wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth. In his letter to the Romans He included the **'great 28'**:

*For we know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28*

He wrote this with certainty that **'we know this'**, not **'we hope this'**. May it be as certain in our hearts as it is in Paul's heart.

*10b - 'On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again'. - In essence Paul is telling them and us - **He did deliver... he does deliver... he will deliver!***

What Trial or adversity are you bringing in with you today? Let me encourage you. As a believer, trusting in God will see you through whatever it is. Learn from Paul's experience, and do not mis-place your trust. If, not when, adversity strikes, you find that your greatest dependence or trust, is based on the your financial portfolio, or your strength and good health, or the stability of our job, or your adamic accomplishments, or your social status, or anything that

"God always aims to glorify himself in one or both of these ways in our experience of adversity. He always aims to wean us away from relaying or trusting or hoping in any help but him alone. Adversity by its very nature is the removal of things on which our comfort and hope have rested, and so it will either result in anger toward God or greater reliance on him alone for our peace. And his purpose for us in adversity is not that we get angry or discouraged, but that our hope shifts off earthly things onto God. John Piper

Let's purpose for **our hope to shift** off of whatever it may be focused upon and onto God.

### **III. Trials bring opportunity (11)**

*(11) You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*

Paul uses strong encouragement for us to pray. When we stop and pray our attention gets refocused on God and His truth. How often do you think about your trial and how often do you pray about it? I would suggest that Scripture suggests that to:

1. ...pray more than we worry about it
2. ...pray more than we think about it
3. ...pray more than we talk about it.

When you share your burdens together, which is the direction we have in scripture - **Galatians 6:2** - *“Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ”*. Certainly, share your burdens, but also take a moment to pray together. Sharing certainly will be a help, but comfort comes from God.

Paul ends this section with prayer as a means to participate with other believers yes, but also to actually bring the power of God and the awareness of the available comfort of God to bear in a person’s life situation. Prayer brings help in trial. Prayer is an expression of faith and dependence, it Focuses us on truth, and directs to God.

He asks for the Corinthians to help them, saying they **MUST** help...

The help they ask for is

- **not for financial help, or provision** - while probably constantly in need
- **not to defend them against false accusation**- although Paul was always being falsely accused
- **not for physical protection** - though having a real threat of being beaten or killed.

The help they ask for - **is prayer** - the most powerful help and help that everyone can participate in. No one is more gifted in prayer than another. People that are known for being men and women of prayer just have put in the time. Everyone has the same opportunity, ability, and invitation. But it does take work.

**Illustration:** Prayer acts like a pair of binoculars or a telescope to bring the image of God from distant to close. The truths of God act

like the focus setting to bring the image of God from blurry to clear. Trial tends to cause my view of God to be distant and blurry. Prayer brings the ability to hope in God into proper biblical perspective... into clear view.

The result of this request for help by praying for them is that many would give thanks in seeing the blessing that comes from God as a result of their prayers.

- A. Prayer allows all to participate in trusting God for Paul and his gospel mission. Paul knows that it encourages the people's prayers when they hear how God answered their prayers, praying on his behalf.
- B. Prayer is an expression of placing of them placing their hope on God in those challenging times. It helps prepare them for the times of their own affliction.
- C. Prayer is setting a pattern of placing their hope on God in the midst of real life, showing their confidence in God - Placing their trust in God.

## II. Conclusion / Application

“Can you trust God? The question itself has two possible meanings before we attempt to answer it. Can you *trust* God.? In other words, is he dependable in times of adversity? But the second meaning is also critical: Can *you* trust God? Do you have such a relationship with God and such a confidence in Him that you believe He is with you in your adversity even though you do not see any evidence of His presence or His power?” Jerry Bridges in *Trusting God*

1. Can you *TRUST* God?
  - a) Look to the truths about God in scripture
    - (1) He is the creator of the world - He created you
    - (2) He is the author of your salvation - He sent His Son for you.
    - (3) He invites you to come to His throne of grace in prayer.

- (4) He knows what you need before you ask Him
- (5) He is your Shepherd, He restores your soul.

2. Can *YOU* trust God?

a) Look to who you are in Christ

- (1) Redeemed you - by the blood of Christ
- (2) Justified you - declared righteous through Christ
- (3) Forgave your sin - by the finished work of Christ
- (4) Adopted you - into the family of Christ
- (5) He is Coming for you - One day, until then He will never leave you or forsake you.

3. If you are not a believer - John 3:16